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# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM FACEBOOK

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## ABSTRACT

Facebook from its origins in 2004, has had an increasing influence in people's life. Considering this increase it is important to note that there are features that could be adapted from Facebook which could be of use in a classroom setting. The paper discusses how in a classroom dialogues need to be encouraged while keeping an open mind to ideas from the students, the ability to be more sensitive to the students and their personal life, integration of students irrespective of their differences as a whole unit, about providing a safe environment that nurtures and encourages growth in the students and finally about opening up the classroom beyond the traditional 4 walls and welcoming technology to aid in teaching.

**Key Words:** Facebook, Classroom management, Technology

## INTRODUCTION

Facebook has a staggering 1.49 billion monthly users (as on July 2015) with over 968 million users logging in everyday (as on July 2015). Facebook has influenced the entire fabric of social relationships. Facebook was initially created as a social study tool and then emerged as a platform for connecting people all over the world is a fact unknown to many. The usage of Facebook has become such an integral part of our lives. 850 million people using the feature of groups, 450 million people using events, 700 million people using messenger each month, 40 million small businesses using pages and a mind boggling 1.5 billion searches daily go on to show the profound influence Facebook is having on our day to day life. For this very reason Facebook is a domain which is being researched extensively. Aaron Smith a senior researcher at the Pew Internet and American Life Project has found that even half of the internet users who do not access Facebook themselves live with someone who does. This shows how far-reaching and widespread the influence of Facebook is. Facebook has been ranked at Number.2 in the Top 500 Global Sites with Google being listed as number one.

With such large user interest it makes us wonder what sets Facebook apart from other social networking sites. Understanding its features and functioning, becomes imperative because it has proved its wide influence on people. Over 29

percent of Facebook users are young adults, so integrating the features that are so engrossing/ engaging on Facebook can only lead to an improvement in the presence of the young minds in the classroom.

It has been found that on an average, a person spends about 55 minutes on Facebook. However previous researchers have found that an individual can have focused attention for about 40 minutes at a time (H.A.Ruff & K.R.Lawson, 1990) and this being the baseline for a class period. That's a whole 15 minute increase while using Facebook! When teachers in classrooms have had trouble maintaining the 45 minutes of attention, how does Facebook manage to not only capture but also receive an extended attention span a whole another 15 minutes? Has the human mind switched off to their kin all of a sudden or is it that somehow a computer screen is more efficient in capturing the mind? This is a question that has become integral. Answering this question makes one to ponder over the already existing patterns of classroom interactions. Classroom interactions are an amalgamation of factors like the student, the teacher and classroom in itself.

Classroom management is the central element to a productive classroom interaction. The ability to conduct a class with minimal disruption from the students and also make the classes as effective as possible in terms of imparting knowledge constitutes as classroom management. It is independent

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of methodology and very complex as any situation a teacher is facing is entirely his or her own responsibility (Renart, 2013).

Classroom management is closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. Only by examining the 3 elements of a classroom, the student, the teacher and the classroom itself, can one understand how motivation, discipline and respect be inculcated. The paper tries to draw parallels between Facebook (a social networking site) and the classroom setting in order to help understand what one could do differently. It is important to understand that teaching students the way they prefer to learn, in a setting that is more conducive to them may improve the teaching learning process many fold.

### 1. What makes Facebook comparable to a classroom?

Parallels can be drawn between Facebook and classroom settings. Facebook in general is a forum to share ones personal life events and are extremely personal it works quiet like a classroom in terms of engaging the user, involving the user in enabling him to learn more about the world and sharing the learnt materials with others. While this happens on the virtual side of the world, ideally in a classroom, a teacher is meant to engage and enable the students to take part in the learning process. Personal and professional networking differs only in the content and not in terms of the tool being used.

Also due to the advancement of technology usage in the society in the recent years, Expansion of knowledge by asking questions about previously unanswered and unexplored areas has become a crucial part of the learning process. Thus such researches have become an important forte for the academicians. Researchers have recognized the utility of Facebook as a novel tool to observe behavior in a naturalistic setting, to test hypotheses, and recruit participants (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012).

### 2. What can we learn from Facebook?

The pace at which Facebook has progressed from a simple site to what now exists with complex dimensions to it provides inspiration. In a classroom where only a lecture method was traditionally used, we need to find space for technological advancements and incorporate them along. Teaching aids like video sharing, video conferencing with someone on the other side of the world is important. When our entire world is becoming a single global village, this is hardly a luxury but a requirement.

Facebook has been evolving from the time of its launch in 2004, however keeping the basics the same. Even though

permanence works in favor of the human mind most of the time, it should be noted that change is the only constant in our rapid growing society. Thus it is vital that the educators of the world understand this. Even though the teaching material might remain the same, the presentation of it should evolve as the years pass by. Years of technological advancement has resulted in various teaching aids being available in the market. Making use of it to improve efficiency in the delivery of teaching should be encouraged.

### 3. The 3 main elements of a classroom and Facebook

Discussing the elements of a classroom, means examining in detail the characteristics of the students, the teacher and the class room environment. From the vantage point of this paper discussing the initial concept is of less importance than the latter two.

#### 3.1. The Student

Creating or refining one's self-identity and values have become an important part of college life. College students are encouraged to discover who they are and how they relate to others. Facebook has successfully enabled its users to create a sense of self for themselves by constructing their profiles with pictures, creating photo albums, adding their life's events and even sharing their likes and dislikes. Allowing the users to create and join groups is another interesting feature of Facebook that can be adopted in the classroom setting. Sets of likeminded people come together in groups where they can freely discuss their ideas, post and share content thereby fostering innovation and spreading knowledge without the fear of judgment from others. Involving people from all walks of life and integrating them into one single unit for the purpose of learning without destroying their sense of self is one of the lessons one needs to take note of. It should be also noted that even though the constants do influence how students react in a classroom setting, their moods and social situation do change constantly and it's a dynamic that never ceases.

#### 3.2. The Teacher

The teacher influences the students and how they respond to the subject in the classroom. Getting influenced by Facebook, at first may cause a reaction of flinch in every teacher earlier but in the recent years it has become evident that there are a few tips one could learn from it. As one logs on to the said networking site, the first question asked is "What's on your mind?" Initial reaction to this maybe of indifference but, this addresses the very first rule in any kind of communication, to say aloud what needs to be heard. Humans have not yet reached a stage in evolution where telepathy is possible; therefore to spell out what is on one's mind is essential. In a classroom setting it is important that the teachers make

their thoughts and plans for the class clear. To be acknowledged by the students is the first step in anyone conducting a class efficiently. Also this process helps prepare the students for the class. An initial briefing about what you have planned for them for the day opens up room for the students to understand and prepare for what lies ahead.

The next prominent construct on Facebook is the “**news feed**”. This is an important feature that helps the user keep updates on all that is happening with his/her friends. Similarly it is always a sign of strength in a teacher to know what is happening with the students he/she is addressing. This results in better rapport with the students and also it has been found that a feeling of being cared for always encourages a better relationship, one that is of mutual respect. The option of commenting upon posts propagates healthy discussion and leads to social constructivism where the students collectively develop an answer instead of relying upon the teacher. Therefore the teacher supplies the raw materials and dons the role of a guide while the students finish the end product. A similar kind of theory has been highlighted by the noted Russian psychologist Lev Vyogtsky in his Z.P.D (Zone of Proximal Development) theory where he states that “cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partners co-construct knowledge”. In this study he highlights the need for teachers to use interactive and co-operative methods where the students can take help and learn from their peers. In the modern scenario, this kind of interaction and cooperation happens on Facebook and other social networking sites. Adopting this kind of methodology can work wonders for both the teacher and the student because social networking interests the learners.

Adding on, the chatting feature on Facebook stresses on the need for dialogues instead of monologues. It is essential that the teachers leave rooms for discussions, queries and debates during the class hours. It is a widely accepted fact that the amount of time a teacher spends for the student to interact and ask questions is not much and time is most of the times insufficient. Several times most of the questions are directed by the teacher. Even though this can be difficult due to the time constraints of a class hour, it is vital that there is a balance struck in terms of addressing the class and leaving time for them to give their impressions of the same. When this equilibrium is not achieved it kills the entire concept of dialogue in the classroom mostly encouraging the philosophy of monologue which kills the fostering and innovation of new ideas in the students’ minds. Knowledge has no bounds and so does the mind of a student, but when ideas don’t come out and start taking shape, they start to stagnate and this ultimately hampers the growth of the individual.

Only when one examines and fully comprehends the information provided, is it of value to them. The feature of chat-

ting has become so famous for yet another ingenious characteristic of it being not awkward to approach people directly. The chat acts as a buffer to eliminate any form of perceived judgment and uneasiness of direct contact. This puts most people at ease and hence a sense of confidence arises. Even though this exact characteristic cannot be adapted to social situations involving face to face contact, it is important to understand that a sense of confidence needs to be built up in the students to approach an educator to discuss issues about classes/ subject matter or even personal issues with a sense of ease.

Facebook was one of the first networking sites to come up with a feature like the “**like button**”. Appreciation for thoughts, photos and ones views on life has encouraged millions to use it as a medium to express, and speak truthfully and sometimes even revolt. It is up to the facilitators to built such an environment which will provide a flow of ideas, innovations and maybe even an answer to the unanswered.

What makes anything in the virtual world exist so successfully is that it can be accessed anytime according to the convenience of the user. This 24/7 availability makes things more convenient and liked. As yet again even though it may not be possible for teachers to be available 24/7, it is a lesson that one should not take lightly. Since the gift of judgment and comprehension has been bestowed upon the human race unlike the virtual world, it is necessary that we use it and keep ourselves open to students accordingly.

### 3.3. The classroom

A classroom setting is something that should be built for the learning experience and like Facebook which is built on and built for people’s interest, a classroom should be for the learning minds build by the learnt mind. One of the constants of the human mind is that we all like to belong. The sense of belonging drives us. According to Abraham Maslow, a need to belong and feel safe is an important need that motivates all human minds. It is only second to the biological needs of the body. If one could create such an environment that assures this in a classroom, the zest with which a student actually attends the class will definitely be on the rise. Also when one’s needs of belongingness have been reasonably gratified, their motivating force diminishes, paving way for self esteem needs (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). Facebook provides this efficiently. This is something that a professor/teacher can provide in an educational setting. In a class of 40 or more personal attention to every single person might not be easy or even sometimes possible. However, to make them feel not lost and belong to a class is easy. This kind of reinforcement can come in many forms from the teacher or even other classmates.

Adding on to the things to learn off Facebook is the how individuals seem to come together as a unit for various causes

despite the fact that they might belong to various different groups. Heterogeneity in classrooms has always interfered with effective classroom management. Making the heterogeneous groups to be of homogeneous nature at least in a classroom is of importance in terms of classroom management. This fosters group cohesiveness within the students which is vital for a sense of belonging and also helps the teacher attend to the needs of the students more efficiently. This group cohesiveness builds up ones confidence to speak out, be more open to newer concepts which might be complex and also enable healthier relationships within the group. A Meta analytical research conducted showed that there was a positive relationship with the average cohesive group performing 18 percentile points above the average non cohesive group (Evans, 1991). Facebook has managed to form the homogeneity among people from all walks of life by tem just having the connectivity to the internet.

Learning includes complex cognitive processes, memory being an important one. Memory is defined as the capacity to acquire, store and retrieve knowledge effectively. Facebook has shown us how one could make drastic improvements using the virtual world. Using Facebook groups to exchange study materials, exchange ideas on projects and expands ones knowledge on various topics has be encouraged. The virtual media has opened up an entire new world of information exchange.

It has been found that Facebooks' systems process 2.5 billion pieces of content and 500 plus terabytes of data every day. Like on Facebook if mutual friends provide more ground for social networking and expanding ones social circle, do they also provide knowledge sources? This is an important feature to focus upon. Even though this revolution might have started, it is important to foster it in the right way.

Considering that in an education system, one is considered learnt through exhibiting high scores on tests it is by default that one understands the importance of memory. Memory can be defined as the encoding, storage and retrieval in the human mind. Allan Paivio with his theory of dual coding theory stresses on how pictures help with the process. According to the dual coding theory memory exists either (or both) verbally or imaginably. Concrete concepts presented as pictures are encoded into both systems; however abstract concepts are coded only verbally. Facebook has been seamlessly integrated this into their approach. Profile pictures, cover pictures and creating albums has left a trend that leaves one in confidence that pictures aid in memories in a very effective manner. Reinforcing the importance of imagery Tony Buzan, in his theory on mind mapping stressed on the importance of using images in order to improve retrieval of information. It has been proved to boost productivity, efficiency, creativity, memory and improve ability to learn information.

An article titled "Study shows Facebook Ups Self-Esteem" was published by Cornell Daily Sun based on a study conducted by Prof. Joffrey Hancock and Amy Gonzales in their study, they found a positive relationship between use of Facebook and the self-esteem of the user among college students. "When we're online, we can selectively self-present," Hancock said. "We can take more time and sound more witty" To adopt this in a classroom setting has loads of positive impact on the way one could impact the students.

#### **4. Learning outside the 4 walls**

Sharing materials which may by chance was not successfully finished in the classroom can be uploaded on the networking site. This facilitates learning to continue even outside of the time constraints of a classroom. Also the virtual world has enabled teachers to open up their classrooms beyond where they are physically. They maybe in a small town, but through the internet they can be linked in real time to students elsewhere. The feature of message threads on Facebook is an excellent concept that need be adapted to the leaning process. This feature enables a teacher to set up assignments on Facebook. The students can leave their viewpoints/ comments on a certain subject discussed in class. Also a discussion forum can be set up and subject matters can be looked upon with great details. Facebook thus helps one eliminate time and physical space as a constraint factor in education.

#### **5. New features**

Continual additions make Facebook exciting as it facilitates hassle free access to information. One such interesting feature is the hashtag feature which makes it easier for the users to find all the content related to a specific theme. Just one click on a hashtag gives the user all the related information that has been posted under the same hashtag. This way the student can access the required information in a very simple and hassle free manner instead of spending countless hours trying to find the resources required

#### **6. Possible challenges**

Even though there are multitudes of advantages to adopting things off the virtual world, the debate comes down to the execution of it. Are the all educators in the teaching fraternity ready to the change? Are all of them equipped to? In these days the students have become the digital natives, the teachers have been left behind as mere digital immigrants who struggle to keep up. Problems of immigrants are often so simple as the inability to cope but sometimes as complex as the rapid progressions and complexities of the immigrant land.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Increasing the usage of Facebook for academic purposes will result in better dispersion of knowledge in terms of ef-



iciency and the reach. In order to optimize the time spent on socializing for increased learning, teachers can encourage students to give their feedback about the classes, sharing materials, approaching other prominent people in their field of study to work upon extra projects and for enhancement of understanding they already have.

This paper sheds light on what one could learn off Facebook that has swept off the new generation lives. By adapting certain features of Facebook to the traditional classroom settings make it more animated and upgraded. Being the digital natives has left the world open to the youth to defy boundaries and expand their knowledge beyond expectations. Facebook offers one of those lessons which show us that boundaries of time and physical presence are not boundaries anymore. It teaches us that existing in virtual time can be molded to the advantages of the education system of this age.

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